

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 3051 without my signature.

I support California's firefighters and other public safety employees. California's workers' compensation system already recognizes the inherent danger in these professions by providing a number of statutory presumptions in favor of the injured public safety employees.

Nothing in current law precludes a person who deserves compensation within the system from being fairly compensated. This bill extends the statute of limitations for the collection of death benefits that are presumptively concluded to be service related. Because current law presumes certain firefighter injuries to be work-related, this bill will also increase the potential for the surviving heirs of firefighters who die from non-work related illnesses to receive workers' compensation death benefits.

Earlier this year, I signed Senate Bill 899, a major overhaul of the workers' compensation system. My Administration is in the process of implementing the necessary regulations to improve the system. The reforms were negotiated in a bi-partisan fashion and are intended to return fundamental fairness to a system that was spiraling out of control. The reforms are intended to refocus the workers' compensation system on medical outcomes rather than litigation. This measure expands the scope of the workers' compensation system disturbing the delicate balance sought by this year's reform efforts.

For these reasons, I am unable to support this measure.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger